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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 KABUL 005848

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STATE FOR SCA/FO DAS GASTRIGHT, SCA/A  
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG  
NSC FOR AHARRIMAN  
OSD FOR KIMMIT  
CENTCOM FOR CFC-A, CG CJTF-76, POLAD

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SUBJECT: PRT/QALAT: GOVERNOR THREATENS TO RESIGN IF LACK OF  
GOVERNMENT SUPPORT CONTINUES

REF: KABUL 5593

Classified By: Ambassador Ronald Neumann for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Governor Arman is severely disappointed in what he feels is the lack of support he receives from the central government and expressed his intent to resign from his position as governor of Zabul if he does not receive the support he has requested. Arman is upset with his lack of power to make and implement decisions in the province, especially regarding security and personnel matters, a tongue lashing he received from Ministry of Interior officials over U.S. involvement in administrative matters, the non and late payment of his discretionary operational funds, and general criticism of his leadership. However, he repeated none of these matters to Ambassador Neumann December 12. Ambassador believes Arman's frustration is real but doubts his departure is near. END SUMMARY

12. (U) Governor Arman just returned from a week long visit to Kabul where he met twice with President Karzai, as well as at least once with senior representatives from the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Defense. PRT Commander and PRTOff were invited to the Governor,s home for dinner upon his return. The Governor was clearly frustrated by his time in Kabul. This was evidenced in part by his speaking through an interpreter in Dari and Pashto, which he rarely does with the PRT, usually insisting on communicating in English and only reverting to his native language when he wants to ensure his points are clearly conveyed.

13. (U) The proximate cause of Governor Arman,s frustration is the decision of the MOD to close the one remaining ANA base in Khaki Afghan, the northernmost district in Zabul province. Previously there were two ANA bases in the district but within the last month, the two bases were consolidated. The Governor had received assurances that the remaining base would stay open. While in Kabul, the Governor heard news that this base would be closed (the ANA has since left and the base turned over to the ANP) despite his extensive lobbying to keep the base open. Arman believes

that an ANA base in Khaki Afghan is vital to security in the north of the province, and he believes that the GOA, with the help of the international community, could keep the base supplied through the winter (difficulty in supplying the base was the primary reason given for the closure). Arman also feels that by removing the ANA, and therefore a large majority of the government presence in Khaki Afghan, the people will lose their trust in the government, and more specifically in him as the governor.

¶4. (U) Having not been consulted about the closure of the base, the Governor lamented his lack of control over decisions in the province. He asked, &if I am the Governor of the province, why is it that my ideas are not listened to?8 He noted that in discussions in Kabul, MOI officials claimed that Zabul provincial Chief of Police, General Paktin, was ineffective and responsible for most of the problems with the ANP in Zabul. Though it has not always been the case, Governor Arman now supports General Paktin as he feels he is honest and is doing a decent job with the resources and manpower he has available. Arman was frustrated by the MOI's desire to replace Paktin, stating that if the Governor was pleased with his performance, why should the MOI interfere with his administration.

¶5. (S/NF) Governor Arman related that he was heavily criticized by MOI officials over the involvement of the U.S. Embassy in remedying several months of non-payment to the ANP in Zabul province. The officials told him in no uncertain terms that he should not talk with the international community about these logistical issues. The Governor informed the officials that the policemen themselves had told Embassy representatives about the non-payment, and that he

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had been asking the MOI for payment for some time. Further, after initially being told that the ANP, including the recently graduated classes of ANAP, had been paid in full, it appears that this is not true. Policemen along the highway have told visiting patrols that they have not received all their money, and the governor confirmed that at least one month,s pay was still owed. However, the governor asked PRTOff not to report this to the U.S. Embassy, as he was afraid of further backlash from the MOI if the Embassy were to intervene, or even voice concern.

¶6. (C) While discussing pay for the ANP, Governor Arman shared that he was unable to augment the pay of the ANP because the MOI is not disbursing his discretionary operational funds in a timely manner. He stated that over the past Afghan calendar year he did not receive operational funds for three months, totaling 30 million Afghanis. He claims he is still owed that money. At this point, his monthly allotment has increased to 12 million Afghanis, and the Governor,s Chief of Staff stated that even now, the money often comes one to two months late. The Chief of Staff also said that they had only 100,000 Afghanis on hand and have purchased goods on credit from various shopkeepers at the bazaar, owing 8.5 million Afghanis.

¶7. (SBU) Governor Arman was also upset over what he felt was the government's questioning his leadership in Zabul province. He relayed the many accomplishments he felt he has made during his tenure as Governor of Zabul. He reiterated that Zabul is not his home, but he is working here in order to fulfill what he sees as his duty to his country as an Afghan. He feels that he has done it well.

COMMENT

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¶8. (C) Governor Arman is clearly very upset, but there are some evident inconsistencies in his frustration. He has apparently forgotten that a few months ago he would have been happy to see General Paktin fired and replaced and likely told the MOI so. The Governor appears to have some vested

(but unknown) interest in Khaki Afghan, as he is very concerned over the closing of the ANA base. He is, however, unconcerned about Arghandab, the district just to the south of Khaki Afghan where there has been a government presence for approximately only three weeks out of the last 2 and 1/2 months. He has never asked to go to Arghandab to talk to the people there but is insistent that he go to Khaki Afghan. To that end, the PRT is working on a plan to take Governor Arman up to Khaki Afghan so that he can show support for the district.

¶9. (C) The Governor's complaints about not having enough control in the province are not new but are relevant. Though it is understood that there is a system of governmental separation of powers in place, nonetheless, it would seem appropriate for the GOA to afford the Governor the courtesy of being able to offer advice and consent on matters that will affect his ability to properly govern the province, especially with regards to security and personnel matters. As for the Embassy's involvement, the Embassy is well aware of the potential downfalls of intervening in matters where the ministries may take offense at its involvement (see reftel) but has undertaken these steps as a matter of last resort in order to preserve minimum effectiveness and overall security.

¶10. (C) Governor Arman is very upset over the current situation and as he has pointed out, Zabul is not his home. By working here, he is separated from his family, and he has often expressed his desire to leave Zabul to be with them. If he continues to hear criticism of the job he is doing, or if decisions that affect his ability to govern continue to be made without consulting him, and if personnel that he

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currently views as capable and effective are fired )- notwithstanding his personal loyalty to President Karzai -- it is not inconceivable that he would submit his resignation. We do not want this to happen, so will continue, via the PRT and the Embassy, to play a facilitative role in helping him to exercise good governance in Zabul Province.

¶11. (C) Ambassador's Comment: I talked at some length with Arman December 12 during the Kandahar PAG. He termed conditions in the province as neither particularly good nor particularly bad. He made no push for special help other than discussing winter shelter for ANAP during training. He has reasons for his frustrations, but they are not significantly different from those of every other governor in Afghanistan. Arman knows he is generally well regarded by the GOA. I doubt he will resign. I have passed on to the Interior Minister Arman's support for his Police Chief, and that should keep the Chief in place for awhile.  
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